

Joint Montana House and Senate Statement on Beaverhead-Deerlodge Partnership Strategy

March 12, Helena, Montana

Chairmen of the Committees, Senate and House members: my name ^{is} ~~if~~ Bruce Ramsey and I am the Supervisor of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you the Forest Service's perspective on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Partnership Strategy, and to alert you to a serious management issue facing the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest.

We are encouraged by efforts like the Partnership Strategy. For the Forest Service, such efforts provide an avenue for building consensus on managing National Forests. We support diverse interests such as those who participated in the Partnership Strategy uniting to develop solutions to resource management problems. Locally developed, citizens-based solutions have the best chance of being implemented on the ground.

The development and release of the Partnership Strategy has not been without some controversy. Since it's release, the partners have reached out, and need to continue to reach out, to the County Commissioners, motorized recreation users, ranchers and mining interests, and others who have a stake in the management of the Forest but were not part of the original strategy.

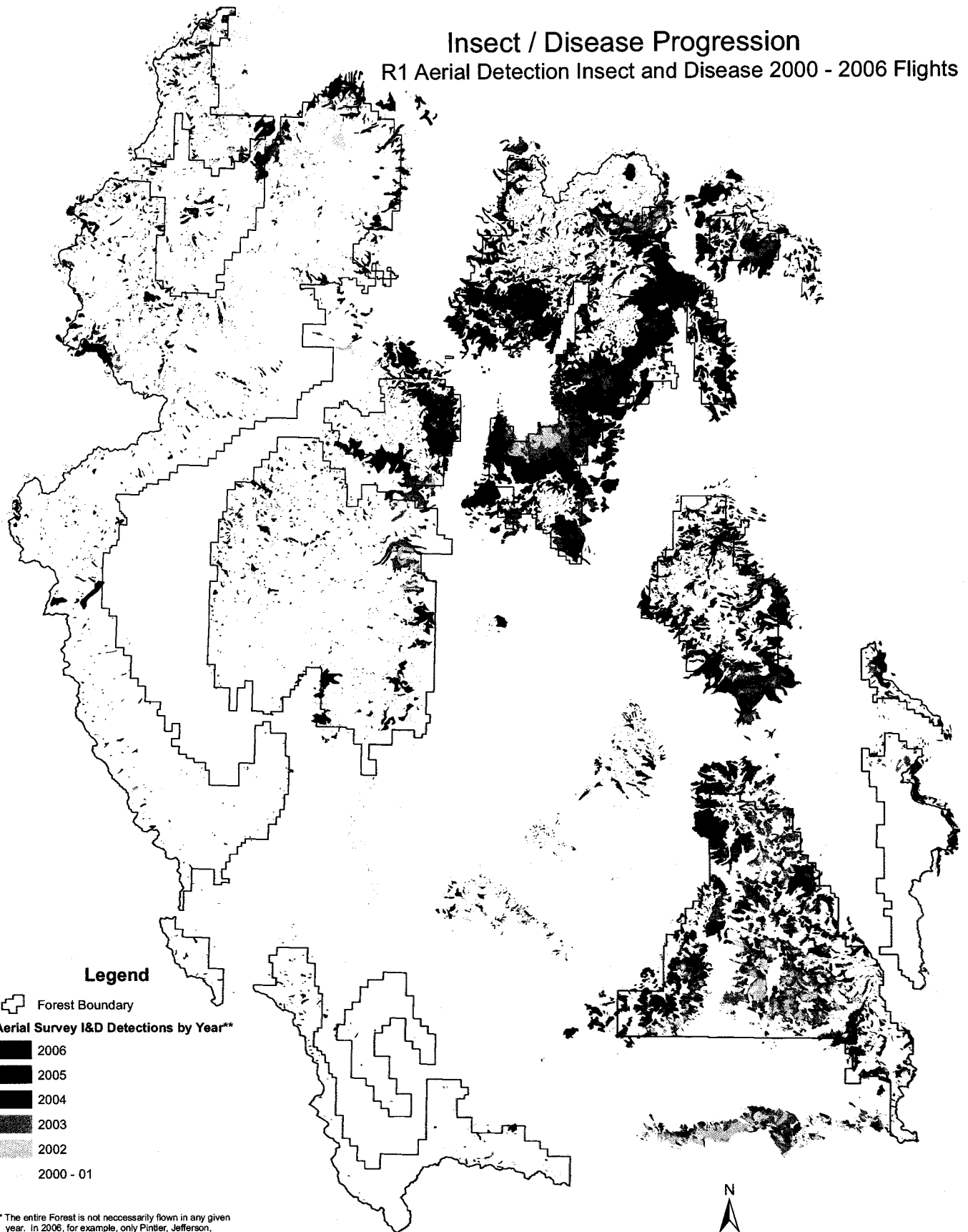
Our own forest planning process continues, apart from whatever activities the Partnership Group is pursuing. We will proceed in accordance with agency policy and procedures, and release a final environmental impact statement for public comment by mid-year. I felt a second round of formal comment was warranted to ensure everyone - all interests - felt they had opportunity to be heard. In addition to over 140 meetings directly in connection to the forest planning effort, over the last year I have personally met with County Commissioners, wilderness advocates and those who oppose any new wilderness, motorized recreation enthusiasts and those who oppose motorized recreation, timber companies, ranchers and members of the partnership strategy.

I want to bring to your attention the state of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge forest health, and the dramatic level and rate of insect and disease activity. Since 1999, over 500,000 acres of the forest has been infested by insects and disease, while at the same time only about 3,000 acres have had mechanical thinning or harvest activity. The scale of the problem requires immediate action to protect structures and community watersheds - at a much larger scale than that which has occurred the last 7 years. We will consider stewardship contracting for every project so that the maximum restoration benefit and community economic opportunity will result. We will work with all interested parties including the County Commissioners, local communities, interested individuals and groups to develop the best projects to address the forest health issue, and the projects with the broadest possible public support.

Bruce Ramsey
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BEAVERHEAD-DEERLODGE NATIONAL FOREST

Insect / Disease Progression R1 Aerial Detection Insect and Disease 2000 - 2006 Flights



** The entire Forest is not necessarily flown in any given year. In 2006, for example, only Pintier, Jefferson, Butte, and part of Madison Ranger Districts were flown.

NOTE: Aerial flights detect various conditions on the forest. Bark Beetles and Fire usually result in some degree of tree mortality. Defoliators, diseases, and other physical damages generally do not result in large-scale tree mortality.



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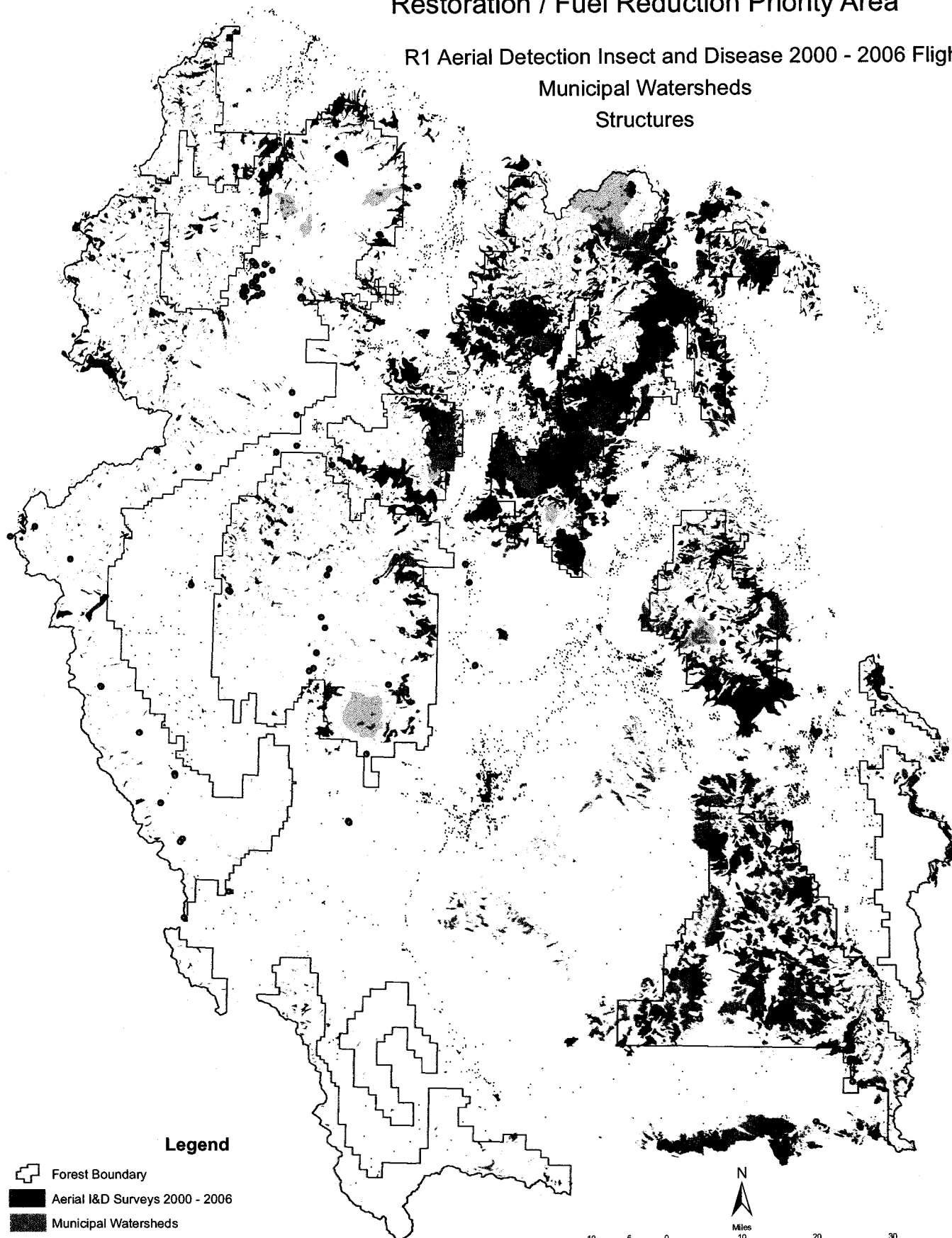
BEAVERHEAD-DEERLODGE NATIONAL FOREST

Restoration / Fuel Reduction Priority Area

R1 Aerial Detection Insect and Disease 2000 - 2006 Flights

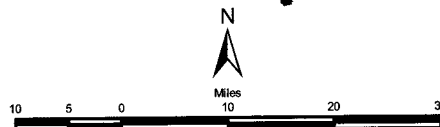
Municipal Watersheds

Structures



Legend

- Forest Boundary
- Aerial I&D Surveys 2000 - 2006
- Municipal Watersheds
- Forest Service Administrative / Recreation Sites
- Structures (Source: Montana Cadastral Survey Centroids)



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